

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BRUSSE 12689 271230Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----271231Z 130119 /20

R 271142Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8681
SECDEF WASHDC
USNMRS SHAPE
USMISSION NATO

S E C R E T BRUSSELS 12689

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MARR, PFOR, NATO, BE, US
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE EUCOM MOVE TO BELGIUM

1. DAVIGNON CALLED ME IN TO TALK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF EUCOM MOVING TO BELGIUM. HE SAID THAT BELGIUM AND THE UNITED STATES SHOULD EXAMINE THE MATTER CAREFULLY AND DECIDE WHETHER THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES WERE GREAT ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY TAKING THE POLITICAL RISKS.

2. TO ILLUSTRATE THE PROBLEM AS HE SEES IT, DAVIGNON RETRACED A BIT OF HISTORY. WHEN NATO AND SHAPE WERE KICKED OUT OF FRANCE AND THE QUESTION OF PROVIDING THEM A NEW HOME WAS BEING DEBATED IN BELGIUM, MANY VOICES WERE RAISED AGAINST HAVING NATO AND SHAPE HEADQUARTERS LOCATED HERE. SOME FEARED THAT THEIR PRESENCE WOULD ATTRACT SOVIET MISSILES IN THE EVENT OF WAR. ALTHOUGH THE DEBATE WAS QUITE HOT, THE BELGIAN PARLIAMENT EVENTUALLY AGREED TO PERMIT NATO AND SHAPE TO SET UP HEADQUARTERS IN BELGIUM. TO GET PARLIAMENT'S AGREEMENT, THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT PROMISED THAT NO OTHER FOREIGN MILITARY BASES WOULD BE PERMITTED ON BELGIAN SOIL.

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3. OPPOSITION TO NATO AND SHAPE HERE HAS GRADUALLY SUBSIDED, DAVIGNON SAID. TODAY THE ISSUE IS QUIESCENT. HOWEVER, THE ORIGINAL BELGIAN CONCERNS ARE STILL PRESENT NOT FAR BENEATH THE SURFACE. DAVIGNON THINKS THAT IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY UNWISE TO RISK A NEW DEBATE IN

PARLIAMENT UNLESS THE STRATEGIC BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM MOVING EUROM HERE WOULD BE LARGE.

4. DAVIGNON IS CONCERNED THAT OPPOSITION TO A PROPOSED EUROM MOVE TO BELGIUM WOULD BE SO GREAT THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD EITHER NOT PUSH IT THROUGH PARLIAMENT AT ALL OR ONLY DO SO AT HIGH POLITICAL COST. IT WOULD BE ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS TO PUT THIS QUESTION BEFORE THE PARLIAMENT WHEN THE GOVERNMENT IS FRAGILE AS AT PRESENT AND THE SOCIALISTS ARE IN THE OPPOSITION. IN EITHER EVENT, DAVIGNON FEARS THAT BELGIAN ANTAGONISM TO EUROM COMING TO BELGIUM WOULD BE SEEN IN THE U.S. AS BELGIAN OPPOSITION TO NATO AND THE COMMON DEFENSE EFFORT. THIS COULD DAMAGE NATO AND THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO EUROPE, TO THE DETRIMENT OF BOTH BELGIUM AND THE U.S.

5. IN DAVIGNON'S OPINION, THERE IS NO WAY THAT THE EUROM MOVE COULD BE ARRANGED WITHOUT A NEW LEGAL INSTRUMENT THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT FOR APPROVAL. DAVIGNON CONSIDERS THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF MOVING EUROM TO BELGIUM IS A NEW POLITICAL QUESTION. IT COULD NOT BE HANDLED AS A LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE OF THE SHAPE HEADQUARTERS BEING HERE. NOR COULD IT BE DEALT WITH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LOC AGREEMENTS.

6. I TOLD DAVIGNON THAT GENERAL HAIG HAD ALREADY REQUESTED THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO ASK THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE TO APPROACH THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT ABOUT A JOINT STUDY OF THE FEASIBILITY OF MOVING EUROM TO
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BELGIUM. I ASKED DAVIGNON WHAT HE THOUGHT ABOUT SUCH A JOINT STUDY. DAVIGNON SAID THAT HE WAS HESITANT RATHER THAN COMPLETELY NEGATIVE. THE BELGIANS ARE PREPARED TO LOOK AT THE PROBLEM WITH US, HE SAID. BUT THE JOINT EXAMINATION SHOULD DEAL WITH POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC QUESTIONS AND NOT ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL QUESTIONS.

7. DAVIGNON NOTED THAT THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT, WITH SHAPE IN BELGIUM AND EUROM IN GERMANY, HAD WORKED SATISFACTORILY FOR MANY YEARS. COLOCATION WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE MORE EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATIVELY. BUT THE KEY QUESTION, IN DAVIGNON'S MIND, IS WHETHER THERE ARE IMPORTANT STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS THAT WOULD WARRANT THE KNOWN POLITICAL RISKS. THIS IS THE QUESTION THAT DAVIGNON THINKS THE U.S. AND BELGIAN SHOULD EXAMINE TOGETHER. IF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS DECIDE THAT THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES ARE GREATER THAN THE POLITICAL DISADVANTAGES, THE LEGAL AND TECHNICAL

PROBLEMS COULD BE SOLVED.

8. PROCEDURALLY, DAVIGNON SAID THAT FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE EUCOM MOVE SHOULD BE THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS. HE SAID THAT THE BELGIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE BELGIAN MILITARY COMMANDS WOULD BE TOLD TO REFER ANY QUESTIONS ON THIS MATTER TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY.

9. PLEASE ADVISE.RENNER

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, REGIONAL DEFENSE ORGANIZATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BRUSSE12689
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760472-0953
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761211/aaaaajab.tel
Line Count: 124
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 APR 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <09 AUG 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POSSIBLE EUCOM MOVE TO BELGIUM
TAGS: MARR, PFOR, BE, US, NATO, EUCOM
To: STATE DOD
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006